

College of Arts and Sciences

Fall Dean's Address 2018

Good afternoon, Welcome to the College of Arts and Sciences Fall address and awards ceremony. As the Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences I would like to enthusiastically welcome each of you back to another exciting academic year. To those of you who are new to ISU, you will find that there truly is something special about Illinois State University. And to all of us in CAS, we couldn't be more proud to be the intellectual heart of the University. I also want to share the regrets of the Provost as she is out of town this week and could not be here today.

As I stepped into the role of interim dean on July 1, perhaps my first realization was how true it is that I stand on the shoulder of giants. I have the auspicious fortune to come into this role following 7 years of leadership from Dean Greg Simpson. My second realization was how I am indebted every day to the expertise and collaborative spirit of the College of Arts and Sciences staff. I would never be able to have any modest amount of success if it weren't for their wise consultation, stewardship and commitment to our mission.

I would like to take a minute to introduce the College Office staff.

Sally Parry is the Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Student Affairs; Marla Reese-Weber is the Associate Dean for Personnel, Budget, and Planning; and Joe Blaney is Associate Dean for Research, Facilities, and Technology. Debbie Fox is the Assistant Dean for External Relations, and is responsible for College events. As you all know, we eagerly look forward to Debbie's return from her medical leave and are grateful for the progress she is making. In the meantime, everyone in the College office has been pitching in to cover Debbie's duties as best we can, so we are grateful for your patience. Carrie Wieburg is our Business Manager, managing the budget and serving as the Dean's assistant. Tammy Hansen is the Administrative Aid, and Rebecca Brown serves as our Office Manager. They present a welcoming face to visitors to the College, and keep the office running efficiently. Mike Regilio is the Director of CAS-IT, leading a team that assists faculty and staff with technology needs, in desktop support, web design, and advice on recent technology advances. Our Director of Development is Stephanie Sellers, now beginning her sixth year of fund raising for the College. I am pleased to work with this dedicated group of individuals whose commitment to the success of our students and faculty will continue to be critical to our growth as a College.

I would like to take a riff off of Greg Simpson's drive and passion of promoting the arts and sciences as the heart and foundation of intellectual pursuits. Those of us in the arts and sciences are particularly resistant to public discourse that higher education should prepare students for the workforce, as if higher education should be job preparation. We are doing much more than that, we are preparing the next generation for relevance in a dynamic, complex global society with challenges that require collaboration, critical thinking, and innovation.

The recent good news on enrollment data appears to validate that students and families understand and appreciate that Illinois State University is a great investment. Perhaps you heard that the newly entering freshman count is up by 10%. As you know, we are a bit special here at ISU. Families and students know that we not only provide a premier education for our students, we do that in so many

ways that connect our students to our greater world. Community Engagement is part of our signature identity at Illinois State University and a particular point of pride for the College of Arts and Sciences. Preparing students for relevance in a dynamic world is “what we do and who we are”.

Some of you may have seen this colorful van parked around campus and the community and wondered what the Illinois Art Station is. The Illinois Art Station is an innovative idea born from Emeriti Professor from Psychology, Dr. Laura Berk’s generosity and inspiration. The project which includes inter-college/inter departmental collaboration from the School of Art in the College of Fine Arts, benefits ISU students who are learning about child development by taking art into communities to interact with children who may not have exposure to creative expression. If you stroll down the Constitution Trail and enter the underpass for Washington Street you will see one of the Illinois Art Stations latest productions as they partnered with The City of Bloomington Citizen’s Beautification Project to engage youth to express their creative views.

This summer, the University hosted the second year of The First Star Academy where students from social work and other majors work with youth in foster care who engage in an Upward Bound College Possible type of experience as these youth otherwise may never have imagined that college could be a dream for them.

The Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders has launched an innovative clinic service for voice modification therapy for transgender clients. This service which is being supported by a College of Arts and Sciences Interdisciplinary Grant not only provides an innovative service to the trans-community, but also provides a rich learning lab for CSD students and research opportunity for faculty.

And if you have not been to the newly-renovated Planetarium, you really should plan an outing. The Planetarium has received a well-deserved and long-awaited updating with new shows scheduled for this fall.

There are so many programs in CAS that prepare students for relevance in our dynamic world such as the publication unit in English, building and competing with the Solar car in Physics, mock trial in Politics and Government, the forensic team from the School of Communication, and our scholars in the Stevenson Center that come from our 3 departments of Economics, Politics and Government, and Sociology/Anthropology. This is just a sampling, I could go on and on. We not only educate our students, we prepare them for lives of making an impact in our world.

Our faculty and staff live out the motto of Illinois State University “Gladly we Learn and Teach” every day. Excellence in teaching has always been the true north of our compass here at Illinois State University with our origins as a teacher’s college. Gladly we teach is in our DNA at ISU, but our faculty also embrace “gladly we learn” with ground-breaking research that involves students in areas of discovery that are transformative for living in a complex, global world.

Dr. Ben Sadd from the School of Biological Sciences was just awarded a \$362,000 grant from NIH to study the gut bacteria of bumble bees. Ben’s lab connects both undergrad and grad students with the exploration of the immune system of bumble bees which can provide relevance to the task of marshalling gut bacteria in humans to boost the immune system and fight infections. Dr. Tony Joseph from Communication Sciences and Disorders connects students with research on how to diagnose and treat blast-related hearing loss for people in the military and our veterans who risked life and health.

Dr. Aimee Miller-Ott from the School of Communication involves her graduate students in the study of communication challenges between adult children and their parents with Alzheimer's Disease. Dr. Kevin Edwards from the School of Biological Sciences was just awarded a \$657,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to provide for instrumentation which will exponentially impact students as this award will serve several researchers and their student teams in BIO and Chemistry. It looks like the College of Arts and Sciences is off to a wonderful start in just the first two months of the year. At this time last year, our total dollars from external funding was \$800,000; this year it is \$3million. So yes, The College of Arts and Sciences is an environment alive with "gladly learning" and so many of these research and creative works connect our students in ways that will be relevant to the world they are to enter and continue to stay relevant by having the ability to adapt as our world goes through rapid change.

It is no wonder that in such a vibrant laboratory in which our students live and learn, that they are inspired to make a difference in our world with achievements and successes even before they graduate. Jeanna Campbell who as a graduate student in the School of Social Work realized that with the ever-increasing cost of higher education, 66% of our ISU student body knows a fellow student who experiences food insecurity. Jeanna along with other students worked with their community and started the School Street Food Pantry which will open to serve students next week. Jacob Grabowski from the Chemistry Department is already distinguishing himself as a scholar by receiving the prestigious Division of Organic Chemistry Summer Undergraduate research fellowship from the American Chemical Society. Jacob's research holds promise for future research on cancer and other diseases. Two undergraduate students from the Department of Physics, Torrey Saxton and Jonathan Unger have received the distinction as Goldwater Scholars from the Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence Foundation. In the Department of Mathematics, senior actuarial science student Kristen Marshall made history by winning the top two actuarial scholarships in the same year. These are only a sampling of outstanding student accomplishments of which there are so many. If I was the parent of so many of our students, I wouldn't be worried about them getting jobs, as they are poised to change our world.

I have mentioned faculty, staff, and student accomplishments, but a part of our CAS pride is our extended family of alumni. Our alumni continue the tradition of making exceptional contributions to our world as they go on to very rewarding, interesting, creative careers and professions. One example is 2009 graduate Tyler Clark who was a double major in History and political science and was appointed by Governor Rauner to be the first Director of the Department of Innovation and Technology. Danny Hajeck a 2011 graduate from the School of Communication was recently named a producer for NPR. And so often as our alumni go forward to do great things, they look back to extend a hand up with generosity and mentorship to those students who are following. An alumna who chooses to remain anonymous from the Department of English recently gave a significant gift of endowment for the Publications Unit that will prepare students for many years to come. Our proud alumni remember the value of their education at Illinois State University and often want to support future alumni through direct student support or by contributing to our excellent programs. It isn't surprising that the College of Arts and Sciences is 85% towards completion of the goal for the Capital Campaign. We owe a debt of gratitude to our development officer Stephanie Sellers for leading us through this process.

The College of Arts and Sciences has premier educational programs, but the true excellence of these programs is made up of the people including faculty and staff, students, and alumni.

President Dietz carefully and confidently led ISU through the storms of uncertainty over the past couple of years. We have heard him refer to Illinois State University as “strong and stable”. And that has been the appropriately prudent path of stewardship for the University. As I look around at all of the energy within the College of Arts and Sciences, I would say we are a bit of an extension on “strong and stable”. Our faculty, staff, students and alumni are not prone to the comfort of complacency but rather are restless, eager, and hungry. I would say the culture of the CAS is “Strong and Stable, with a forward, leading edge”. And as I reflect on this, preparing our students for a life of relevance to our world is just the beginning, they go onto lives of innovation that change our world.